



We hope you will use these brief reflections everyday—and find that it helps you to grow closer to Christ. If you would prefer to receive the weekly file by e-mail, just send an e-mail message to ghilke@neo.rr.com and say “add me to the Take Five list”.

*Invest just five minutes a day,
and your faith will deepen and grow—a day at a time.*

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2009

THIRTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Do you see what I see?

Two tourists are sitting in a small, ancient church in Wales at twilight when a girl of about 12 enters holding the hand of a boy who must be her younger brother. As the two make their way forward, the girl gently guides the boy's hand along the rough stone wall. They stop at a statue of Mary to trace her face and feel the cold marble folds of her gown. At that altar the girl places her brother's hands around the candlesticks; he feels the tabernacle, and the crucifix. Then they leave. As the door closes behind them, one tourist remarks to the other, “Isn't it a pity that boy couldn't see how beautiful this church is?” Her companion replies, “Are you kidding? He saw more than either of us.”

TODAY'S READINGS: *Jeremiah 31:7-9; Hebrews 5:1-6; Mark 10:46-52*

“I want to see.”

MONDAY, OCTOBER 26

Free at last

On the surface today's gospel is about the healing of a woman whose physical freedom and range of motion had been severely restricted for 18 years because of a crippling disease. Yet it is also about the healing all of us require, for who among us has not entered adulthood “wounded” at some level that restricts our spiritual freedom? Jesus frames his activity in terms of “setting free” one who was in bondage. Most of us would gladly get in line for that kind of healing. The good news is, we don't have to wait in line—Jesus is ready to perform such healing acts right now. Ask and you shall receive.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Romans 8:12-17; Luke 13:10-17*

“Ought not this woman . . . be set free from this bondage?”

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 27

Hope in the unseen

The mustard seed is small even for seeds, too small perhaps for birds to see as they fly. Yet this is the seed that Jesus picks out to represent his kingdom. The seed that birds cannot see eventually becomes a home for them. In the full-grown tree the birds will not consider how their place of rest came to be from an invisible seed. Our situation is much different from the birds', however, for in our lives our place of rest, our hope must be in that mustard seed. Saint Paul wrote to the early Christians: “Hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.” Today take rest in the invisible.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Romans 8:18-25; Luke 13:18-21*

“What is the kingdom of God like? . . . It is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in the garden.”

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 28

FEAST OF SIMON AND JUDE, APOSTLES

Take the hard road

We assume the apostles must have been solid, holy people because Jesus handpicked them to be part of his inner circle of friends and disciples. But the gospels present quite a different picture. These were ordinary people who weren't always clear about Jesus' message, who occasionally turned their back on Jesus even when he was most in need, and who struggled with their own faith. The apostles'

relationship with Jesus as well as their faith was a work in progress that ultimately brought them closer to God. Like the apostles, we, too, encounter struggles in our relationship with Jesus and our faith. Allow your struggles and missteps to become another positive step in getting to know God more deeply.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Ephesians 2:19-22; Luke 6:12-16*

"You are no longer strangers and aliens, but . . . also members of the household of God."

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 29

Degrees of separation

For those times when God seems distant or absent, when people move through their day and don't see signs of God anywhere, it's easy to forget that God is behind it all. Yet even a world that feels more haunted rather than filled with God's presence is still beloved creation—the expression of God's overflowing love. A number of spiritual masters have suggested the practice of seeing God in all things. After all, if God really did create everything, it must be possible to find a string in every moment that leads back to the divine. Saint Paul, for one, was sure nothing in the universe could separate people from God. And why not? It all comes from the one who made it.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Romans 8:31b-39; Luke 13:31-35*

"For I am convinced that neither . . . height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 30

Dining with "the enemy"

Despite his differences with the Pharisees, Jesus never stopped communicating with them, even going so far as to dine with them. And if they were not particularly open to his message, they at least were impressed enough to invite him to dinner and hear him out. In an age where public differences of opinion, played out as they are in front of the ever-present media, seem to descend to the level of insult and demonization, you can share a meal with someone with whom you disagree. Though you may not settle all your differences in a meal (or ever), you can agree to disagree on some matters—and perhaps still agree on a favorite dessert!

TODAY'S READINGS: *Romans 9:1-5; Luke 14:1-6*

"Jesus was going to the house of a leader of the Pharisees to eat a meal."

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 31

FEAST OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Have a seat!

Please sit down. Anywhere's fine. Just be forewarned: Where you sit now affects your place for all eternity. Here's the fine print of our existence we all too often disregard: Our comfort and our neighbor's discomfort are inextricably linked. The disciples who hoped to sit on either side of Jesus were invited to drink from a bitter cup first. Young Mary of Nazareth may have perceived that when she agreed to take one of the lowest places in history: that of the unmarried pregnant teenager. The church tells us she's now enthroned as Queen of Heaven. Where would you like to sit?

TODAY'S READINGS: *Romans 11:1-2a, 11-12, 25-29; Luke 14:1, 7-11*

"Go and sit down at the lowest place, so that . . . your host may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher.'"

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